



# Appleby Archaeology



Autumn 2000

Issue 11

## Editorial

An enjoyable day was spent in July as members learned some simple surveying methods on a moor near Appleby. The enthusiasm shown at recent meetings and events suggests that there is a need for a more active participation within Appleby Archaeology Group.

It has been said of other amateur archaeology groups that their success is due to their fieldwork activities for these allow personal contact with the past. It is hoped that our own landscape project will provide such a focus for Appleby Archaeology Group.

This edition of the newsletter contains two reports by members of the group who are already active in their own fields of interest. Harry Hawkins reports on a recent conference in Durham, and Stanly Darke shares some of his experiences as a volunteer at

the recent Frenchfield excavations near Penrith.

Contributions to the newsletter from members are always welcome. If you have an interest or article to share please send it to the address on the back page or telephone to discuss it.

## Committee Matters

With regret our publicity person, Georgina Plowright has had to resign from her post due to other commitments. Georgina's efforts in publicizing our events have been greatly appreciated and her presence at committee meetings will be missed.

We are now seeking one or two new committee members who would be willing to take a role in running the group. We meet four times a year plus the AGM. If you feel you can help please contact me on 017683 61633.

Martin Railton



Above: Plotting an earthwork near Appleby. Right: The finished plan.

## Landscape Archaeology Project

More than a dozen members of Appleby Archaeology Group have been involved in developing a project to investigate the history of the landscape in the Eden Valley.

Three meetings have been held at Appleby Grammar School and have resulted in the creation of survey forms for recording historic landscape features such as ridge and furrow, lynchets and hollow ways. A pilot project is planned for this Autumn involving as many members of the group as possible.

The idea of the project is that interested members of the public can use the forms to investigate their local area and record any visible surviving features. The forms will be returned to us for further investigation by our research team and a report produced on the area studied.

If you would like to take part in the pilot project it is being launched at Appleby Grammar School Intake Center on Tuesday 19th September from 7.00pm.

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## Archaeology in the North

### CBA Conference 24th June

Recent work on two sites in Cumbria was reported at this annual conference organized by Archaeology North at Durham.

There were to be three but Paul Flynn who was to talk on Recent Excavations in Workington failed to make it as he suffered problems with his car. The other six sites reported on were Bamburgh Castle where work continues on excavating a suspected Anglo-Saxon burial ground, a project by Northumberland National Park Authority to map and record all the hill forts in the county (the archaeology of Northumberland has been described as the country's best kept secret and produced the best slides of the day), a rescue dig in Gateshead mainly concerned with a medieval and post-medieval rectory but which also discovered a suspicious burial of a female in a street that was eventually dated to the 1640s, a talk on how experts can help local groups with their historical projects, a survey of industrial archaeology in Teeside and an update of rescue work in Durham, once again concerned with medieval and post medieval material.

Back in Cumbria at Birdoswald Tony Wilmott, had been attempting to uncover the pre-Wall environment by excavating through the turf wall and the Vallum. This work revealed plough marks suggesting the site was in use and farmed prior to the arrival of the Romans. Time Team had also helped out to uncover a large Viscus to the east

of the fort. On-going this year is further recovery of the lost milecastles of the Wall. In Carlisle Mike McCarthy has been working ahead of the Millennium projects. On the site of the Irish Gate, more signs of the Roman fort have been found and pre-Roman plough marks showing that this site too, was occupied before the Romans arrived. In front of Tullie house they have uncovered the medieval ditch that lay between the city and the castle but which had been lost. It measured at least 30 metres wide and 5 metres deep. Also in front of Tullie house they revealed a continuous stratigraphical sequence from the Roman fort until at least the 12th century but unfortunately without any dating material for the strata.

In all a worthwhile day of excellent talks that showed the wide spread of archaeology throughout all periods in the region, the only subject missed was a monastic site!

Harry Hawkins

## UPDATE

### THE LADY WELL

Members visited the Lady Well, Appleby this summer to assess the state of the site and to discuss how it could be preserved as part of the town's heritage. The site is currently being developed as a housing estate and there was concern that the waters, like the Appleby Friary site, could be buried and lost.

The first thing we noted was that the name of 'Lady Well' quoted in early maps is misleading. The word 'well' actually refers to the place where the water rises as a spring and not a constructed feature. The original site of the spring appears to lie under the embankment of the Appleby to Stainmoor railway but it rises in the field below to fill a drinking trough maintained by farmers of the past to water their stock. From there the water has been diverted under ground and runs beneath the Settle to Carlisle railway towards the site of the Appleby Friary. The water would once have been used in the friary and fed the friary fishponds before flowing into the Eden. It is hoped that the site where the water rises can be preserved and a plaque created to explain the site's connection to the friary.

For more details contact Aileen on (017683) 61633

*Below: Members inspect the site of the Lady Well (spring).*



## LOCAL EVENTS DIARY

### General

**Appleby Archaeology  
Landscape Project**  
Pilot Project Launch 19/09/00

A session aimed at developing our pilot project to study the development of the landscape in the Eden Valley. Participants will be provided with full instructions in the evening.

Meet at the Appleby Grammar School Intake Center at 7.00pm

**Society for Landscape Studies  
Annual Conference 28/10/00**

To be held at Lancaster University consisting of a series of talks on archaeology and landscape studies in the North West. The conference is followed on 29/10/00 by a field trip to explore the landscapes of the Upper Eden Valley.

Contact the Center for North West Regional Studies on (01524) 593770 for more details.

**A Fresh look at Birdoswald**  
Masonic Hall, Alston 08/11/00

A talk by Elaine Allen on Birdoswald Roman fort starting at 7.30pm (part of the Alston Moor Historical Society season). Contact Carol Sutton, Sec for more details on (01434) 381933.

### Recent Research into Roman Cumbria

**Geophysics and Old Carlisle**  
Tuesday 3rd October 7.00pm

A talk by Jan Walker on recent research at the impressive roman fort of Old Carlise undertaken by Manchester University in conjunction with the Archaeological Support Group.

Jan will also be giving us an introduction to the methods of geophysical research employed by archaeologists using examples from the fort.

Meetings are held at the Appleby Grammar School Intake Center between 7.00 and 9.00pm.

Talks are free of charge to members of Appleby Archaeology Group. Non-members are very welcome (£1.00 contribution).

Telephone Martin on 017683 61633 for more details.

**Roman Frenchfields and  
Castle Green**  
Tuesday 7th November 7.00pm

Gerry Martin of the Carlisle Archaeological Unit has been involved in the recent excavations at Frenchfields near Penrith, and the Millennium project at Carlisle Castle.

He will be sharing some of the findings which reveal more about the Roman occupation of Cumbria.



## A Day in the Life of a Volunteer Digger

The alarm sounds. It feels unearthly early. But I know there is no time to waste, so get up. Just time to make my wife an early morning cup of tea in bed while listening to the local weather forecast. This (the forecast) matters. Will it rain? It is no fun digging in the rain. Soon I am on my way, whatever the weather. At the site a bevy of professionals is listening to the Director. They all wear waterproofs. I put mine on. They all wear helmets and high-viz jackets. I follow suit. Has the Director anything I can help with, I ask? Certainly, he says, but first takes me through the current state of play (he is always excellent about this). We descend into the excavation area; he nimbly, me more gingerly. I also have a bucket, a kneeling mat and my small archaeologist's trowel. We go to an area bounded by the remains of a wall and a ditch. Stage one; help remove rainwater from the various holes and depressions on site. Stage two; remove surface layer from my patch to a maximum depth of half a centimeter; less, if any change in colour or consistency. Stage three will depend on what appears. Bailing and sponging I collect half a bucket of water. Stage two sees me on my knees for a few hours, steadily and carefully scraping with my trowel. The scrapings rapidly fill my bucket. To empty it I negotiate a precarious route across the site, then up several ledges to a waiting wheelbarrow. But what is this? Embedded in my patch of earth I find a piece of Roman pottery. Not an uncommon find, but great for me when I think this has not seen the light of day for some 2000 years. I note the context number of the find and take it up to the "office". The latter is a mobile hut, its interior in a state of apparent chaos, the floor made muddy by the passage of numerous muddy boots. I seal my find in a plastic bag, write on it the details of the site and find spot before putting it into the pottery finds box. Back on my patch I am pleased to next find a Roman nail – square cross section and large head. Repeat of bagging up. Another heavy bucket of soil to dispose of. Another "find". Not an artefact but a change in surface colour, a darker coloured circle about 20 cm. across. Then a shout to me across the length of the site from the Director, who is talking to a stranger with a microphone. I thread my way across. He asks if I would mind being interviewed by the local radio man? This because I am a volunteer as compared with the other fifteen "diggers" who are all professionals (that is they have at least one archaeology degree each and are being paid). Questions like "why do I volunteer for this hard, dirty work" (we are all very mud stained). Back to my patch. The circle must be a posthole. I know the drill. Excavate half, draw and photograph the cross section. Having trowelled out the half, I fix a nail in the surface at each end of the section. Using a mini spirit level I fix a horizontal piece of string between the nails. The absolute height of the string I determine via a levelling instrument on the site edge. I measure the position of the nails on the site grid. I then measure off the coordinates of a number of points in the section, i.e. distance along string and below it, ready for my 1:10 scale drawing. I complete the context sheet with detailed information on the posthole and its fill. All this takes the rest of the day. The detail is required by the Director when he comes to write his report on the whole excavation. Also, if someone else wishes to reinterpret the site at a later date, they will have a complete record of it, even though it has been irrevocably destroyed.

Back home for gallons of tea and a bath!

Stanley Darke

*Stanley works regularly as a volunteer for Carlisle Archaeology Unit*



APPLEBY ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP  
HILLSIDE, NEWBIGGIN,  
TEMPLE SOWERBY,  
CUMBRIA CA10 1TE Tel. 017683 61633